Wherever your journey takes you, **experience matters.**

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PLAN 2020-25

We value environments rich in experiential learning, where students and faculty critically examine the world around them, grow as individuals and play an active role in addressing society's most pressing challenges.

Eyes High Strategy

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Building a
Strong Foundation

Our complex and changing world requires post-secondary graduates with advanced skills in research, entrepreneurial-thinking, collaboration, and communication. At the University of Calgary, we recognize that it is critical for our programs to integrate hands-on experience with academic study, so that our students are well-equipped as future leaders in industry, government, and non-profit.

We take a comprehensive approach to student experience. In addition to academic programs, our undergraduate students engage in many experiential learning opportunities, including field schools, laboratories, and simulation activities. Graduate students may work as research assistants or pursue internships to connect skills with knowledge developed during their degrees. We also offer activities outside of regular curriculum that contribute to our students' personal and professional development, such as undergraduate research programs and international competitions.

This type of learning is called experiential learning — or *learning by doing* — and requires students to grapple with messy problems, sort through different perspectives, and develop new ways of thinking. It offers vital opportunities for students to engage with issues of global relevance and great importance to our communities.

At UCalgary, we have a solid foundation in the knowledge and practice of experiential learning.

Meeting a
Growing Need

Experiential learning often — but not always — takes learners outside of the classroom. It includes internships, field studies, co-ops, laboratories, creative performances, simulations, capstone projects, practicums, undergraduate research, and many others. Students find these types of learning experiences to be deeply engaging and relevant to their future career paths and personal interests. They solve problems and work on projects that resonate with them and they are then able to carry their learning forward and reapply it in different settings.

Experiential learning opportunities support students in discovering their sense of purpose, improving their civic consciousness and employability, and preparing them for leadership roles in their communities and organizations.

In recent years, governments have explored the potential of experiential learning to reduce the shortage of skilled graduates and disruption in the workforce due to automation in our knowledge-driven technology economy.

They have been calling for all students in post-secondary programs to participate in at least one experiential learning opportunity before graduation. Provincial and federal governments have focused on experiential learning as a promising practice to support the economy, to ensure Canada is producing the talent it needs, and to equip graduates with the right skills to account for workforce changes.

This shift to experiential learning coincides with the public critique of post-secondary institutions to develop more future-ready, highly skilled graduates who leave university as active citizens ready to drive positive change in the organizations and communities they belong to and serve.

Our **Bold Vision** for Experiential Learning

UCalgary's bold commitment to experiential learning will make *learning-by-doing* a cornerstone of our student experience and positions our university to become a leader among Canadian post-secondary institutions. The Experiential Learning Plan (2020-25) is intended to provide a framework for experiential learning that includes common language, criteria, and categories that allow us to effectively describe and promote experiential learning opportunities to students and partners. A common framework also allows us to measure our progress, recognize efforts, and collaborate across units and disciplines to build capacity in experiential learning and shift culture.

By 2025, experiential learning will be a **cornerstone** of the UCalgary student experience.

All **undergraduate students** will participate in at least two high-quality experiential learning opportunities during their academic studies.

All **graduate students** in a degree program will have the opportunity to participate in at least one experiential learning opportunity.

The framework described in this plan emerged through broad consultations throughout 2018-19, an environmental scan, and engagement with educational leaders across campus. The collective expertise and unique strengths of our entire campus community are indispensable to enhance and build upon this exciting work. It is only through a community approach that we can reach the goals outlined in this plan.
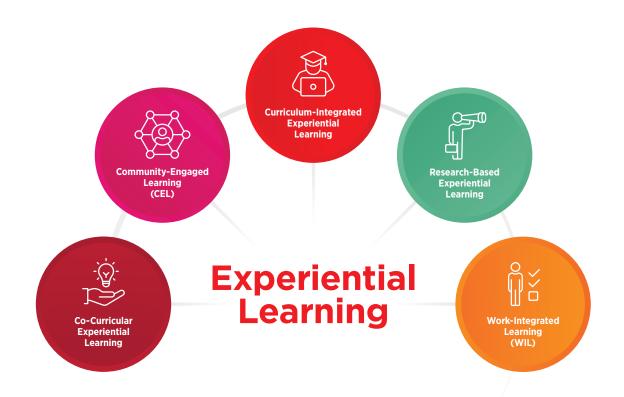
Experiential Learning

Experiential learning (EL) is learning-by-doing that bridges knowledge and experience through critical reflection. EL activities are intentionally designed and assessed. As such, they empower learners to enhance individual and collaborative skills such as complex problem solving, professional practice skills, and teamwork. Reflecting critically on these activities helps individuals develop higher-order thinking to challenge and advance their perspectives. The EL process prepares students to take on roles as active citizens and thrive in an increasingly complex world.

Ensuring **High-Quality Learning**

Identifying criteria for high-quality experiential learning opportunities will enable UCalgary to define, measure, and evaluate work in experiential learning across campus. In our framework, activities become high-quality and meaningful experiential learning when they involve all four of these elements:[1]

Pedagogy

Experiential learning activities are intentionally integrated into the program curriculum. They have learning outcomes that support students in connecting their learning from experience to their disciplinary, personal, and career directions.

Experience

Hands-on experiences that directly support students in achieving learning outcomes, contributing to their discipline or host organization, and developing relevant skills.

Assessment

Students' learning is assessed throughout the activity to enable them to use feedback to continuously develop their skills, construct new meaning, and challenge their attitudes and beliefs.

Reflection

Learners engage in and are supported through meaningful and ongoing reflection to connect their learning to other experiences, knowledge, or aspirations.

[1] McRae, N., Pretti, T.J. & Church, D. (2018). *Work-Integrated Learning Quality Framework*, AAA.

UCalgary **Framework** for Experiential Learning

Curriculum-Integrated Experiential Learning

Community-Engaged Learning (CEL)

Research-Based Experiential Learning

Co-Curricular Experiential Learning

Experiential Learning

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

Accelerators • Capstone projects • Case studies • Co-curricular CEL • Co-curricular internships • Community-engaged research • Competitions • Consulting projects • Cooperative education • Course-based research projects • Creative performance/exhibits • Curricular CEL projects/placements • Design/project-based learning • Field schools • Hackathons • Immersive personal development programs • Individual research projects/studentships • International/cross-cultural learning experiences • Internships • Knowledge-keeper guided learning • Laboratories • Land-based education • Paraprofessional placement/on-campus employment • Pitch competitions • Professional/clinical practice/field experience/practica • Research assistantships • Simulations • Studios • Supported volunteer experiences

The inclusion of a broad range of activities in the Experiential Learning Framework will help us ensure that all students can access meaningful, high-impact learning opportunities.

Co-Curricular Experiential Learning

Co-curricular experiential learning activities are university-organized experiences occurring outside of the regular curriculum. This category includes co-curricular internships, immersive personal development programs, and supported volunteer experiences.

Community-Engaged Learning

Whether curricular or co-curricular, community-engaged learning activities seek to cultivate a sense of civic consciousness, address social issues, and contribute to the public good. Community-engaged learning builds on the definition of community engagement used in the Carnegie Classification to describe public outreach, scholarship, and teaching and learning. Community-engaged learning activities are mutually beneficial, designed in partnership with community organizations, and address a community-identified need.

Curriculum-Integrated Experiential Learning

Curriculum-integrated experiential learning takes place in academic courses. It includes a broad range of activities that empower students to practice and enhance their disciplinary learning and skill development as part of course activities. This category involves case studies, field schools, and laboratories.

Research-Based Experiential-Learning

Research-based experiential learning supports students in developing skills and capacities for creativity, innovation, and discovery by leading or contributing to a research project. This category contains three activities: Course-based research, individual research projects or studentships, and research assistantships.

Work-Integrated Learning

We often use experiential learning and work-integrated learning interchangeably, but they are not the same. Work-integrated learning incorporates a student's academic studies in a workplace or practice setting; in other words, it is a curricular activity or recognized as part of a degree program. It includes a partnership of an academic institution, a host organization, and a student. Work-integrated learning can occur at the course or program level and incorporates learning outcomes related to employability, personal agency, and life-long learning. These experiences may be paid or unpaid.

Experiential Learning **Framework**

Co-Curricular Experiential Learning

University-organized experiences occurring outside program curriculums.

Accelerators
Leverage resources, space, mentorship, and funding to develop a start-up or to advance ideas that address local or global challenges.

Co-curricular Internships
Participate in a supervised and structured work term. An internship may be paid or unpaid. The length varies by program.

Competitions
Compete to address new audiences and global challenges using curiosity, creativity, and innovation. Students gain practical experience, presentation and collaboration skills, and networking opportunities.

Immersive Personal Development Programs
Structured, university-organized experiences that support learners' personal development and skill acquisition. They typically involve a cohort of students.

Paraprofessional Placements and On-Campus Employment
Students are placed or employed on-campus and mentored by staff or faculty. The roles contribute to the campus community.

Supported Volunteer Experiences
Learn accountability to the community while applying other experiences, disciplinary knowledge, or career directions through university-supported volunteer experiences.

Hackathons
Engage in a short and intensive challenge where teams of students collaborate to develop a solution to a real-life problem.

Community-Engaged Learning

Designed with community organizations to address an identified need. Community-engaged learning helps students to cultivate a sense of civic consciousness, address social issues, and contribute to the public good.

Co-Curricular Community-Engaged Learning
Deeply explore a societal issue and reflect on individual experiences, disciplinary learning or career directions while supporting a community organization.

Community-Engaged Research
Connect disciplinary learning, skill development, and concepts through activities designed with a community organization to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

Knowledge-Keeper Guided Learning
Listen and engage with traditions, knowledge, practices, and cultural processes in a learning experience (such as a ceremony) guided by a traditional knowledge keeper.

Land-Based Education
Re-establish a sense of connection with the land and others through this Indigenous pedagogy that honours traditional ways of knowing. Often led by a traditional-knowledge keeper, typically involves storytelling, a re-introduction to the land, and knowledge exchange across generations.

Curriculum-Integrated Experiential Learning

Includes a broad range of academic activities that empower learners to enhance their disciplinary learning and skill development.

Case Studies
Put learning into action by applying theory to real-world or simulated cases.

Creative Performance
Produce, manage, curate, or participate in a dramatic, artistic, dance or musical performance or exhibit for a virtual or live audience.

Design and Project-Based Learning
Develop complex problem-solving and teamwork skills by engaging with a real-world challenge in a course setting, typically with mentorship from an instructor.

International and Cross-Cultural Learning
International and cross-cultural experiences such as exchanges, group study programs, study abroad, and collaborative online intercultural learning.

Laboratories
Observe, test, and apply course concepts in a controlled setting specialized for small group learning.

Pitch Competitions
As part of an academic course, students prepare and deliver a compelling idea for a product or solution to an expert panel of judges.

Simulations
Engage in hands-on, structured scenarios or activities that mimic actual events. Simulations are typically case-based and may include one or more of the following: human simulation, virtual simulation, augmented reality, virtual reality, game simulation or standardized patient actors.

Studios
Apply theory to practice in a studio setting to demonstrate disciplinary learning and to reflect on the process and products of one's work.

Field Schools
Engage in hands-on investigation and analysis in a field location.

Research-Based Experiential-Learning

Students develop essential skills and enhance their capacity for creativity, innovation, and discovery by leading or contributing to a research project.

Course-Based Research
Research activities occurring within a course setting for academic credit.

Individual Research Projects and Studentships
Research projects led by students and supported by faculty.

Research Assistantships
Build academic experience and hone inquiry skills by assisting with a faculty-led research project.

Work-Integrated Learning

Integrates academic studies in a workplace or practice setting. Includes an academic institution, a host organization, and a student. Includes learning outcomes related to employability, personal agency, and life-long learning.

Capstone Projects
A senior culminating experience to draw upon the knowledge, skills, and abilities students developed through a degree program.

Consulting Projects
Interact with a client to identify and analyze opportunities within an organization and develop a solution or strategy for moving forward.

Cooperative Education
Formally integrate academic study with paid work experience in cooperating employer organizations.

Internships
Participate in a discipline-specific, supervised, and structured work term. An internship may be paid or unpaid, and the length varies.

Professional and Clinical Practice, Field Experience, and Practica
Work under the supervision of a professional in the field. In some cases, these placements are required for professional certification..
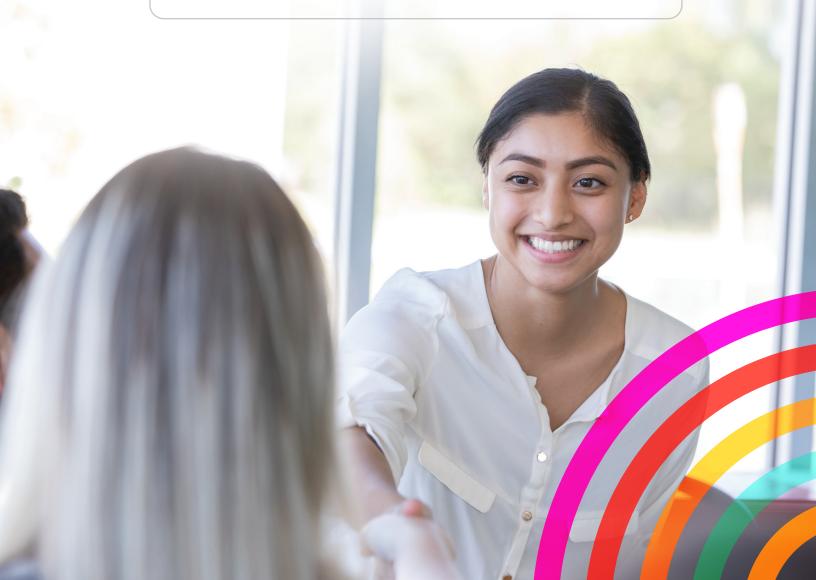
Our **Priorities**

We seek to **expand and enhance experiential learning** at UCalgary by:

1. Expanding capacity and reducing barriers
2. Increasing student opportunities
3. Tracking and ensuring high-quality experiential learning

PRIORITY 1:

Expand Capacity and Reduce Barriers

Making experiential learning a cornerstone of the UCalgary experience requires commitment from the entire campus community and our partners. Our collective expertise and unique strengths are indispensable to advancing experiential learning across campus.

Academic units	We will support faculty and staff in developing relationships with community partners and designing and managing experiential learning activities.
Support units	We will work to create tools and resources that enable us to communicate with our stakeholders and to create lasting partnerships. We will improve our processes for understanding when input is needed from business units such as risk, finance, and legal.
Current students and alumni	We will develop clear and meaningful messages on the benefits and availability of experiential learning opportunities, particularly for students from equity-seeking groups. Guidance from student leaders and groups will be essential, and recent graduates can be champions and partners in this work.
Community and industry partners	We will prepare new community and industry partners to work with students; this will take engagement and education, including communication on mutual benefits and expectations. We will identify a centralized UCalgary contact to manage experiential learning opportunities with partners and to reduce barriers. We will celebrate our current and future partners and strengthen our relationships with them.
Office of Experiential Learning	Embedded within the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, and working in partnership with the campus community, the Office of Experiential Learning will develop pedagogical resources, connect educators, help track, evaluate experiential learning initiatives, and strengthen experiential learning scholarship. This centralized team will also work in partnership with student groups and business units to understand and reduce barriers to student participation in experiential learning.

PRIORITY 2:

Increase Student Opportunities

By 2025, experiential learning will be a cornerstone of the UCalgary student experience. We will build our capacity to ensure that all undergraduate students participate in at least two experiential learning opportunities before graduation. We will strive to offer all graduate students in a degree program at least one opportunity to participate in experiential learning.

To achieve these ambitious targets, we will increase the visibility of existing opportunities, communicate their value, increase the number of flexible options, and enhance accessibility for students from equity-seeking groups.

Increasing opportunities for students will require a community effort. There are several actions that we can take across the campus community to facilitate experiential learning, including but not limited to:

- Integrating experiential learning into the curriculum review process and ensuring new opportunities form part of proposals for new programs of study.

- Examining barriers to participation in experiential learning for students from equity-seeking groups and exploring best practices for fostering accessibility.

- Developing advising and recruitment resources to identify clear student pathways for experiential learning by discipline.

- Exploring the development of a flexible work-integrated learning program as an option for students who are ineligible or unable to extend their program of study to complete a cooperative education program.

- Developing a micro-credential to offer formal recognition for experiential learning and skills development.

- Identifying areas for collaboration such as exploring partnership development, curriculum for work-integrated learning, or processes for community-engaged learning.

- Cultivating new and meaningful community and industry partners that can offer or support experiential learning.

" The diversity of experiences I had made me realize that my life and career path are not linear. I will come across many various opportunities, and it's okay if I try out different activities. From time to time, I will change my life's direction as I follow my sense of purpose."

— **Celina Pablo**

BACHELOR OF COMMERCE, 2019

PRIORITY 3:
Track and Ensure High Quality

Creating quality measures and practices will ensure that our experiential learning activities are meaningful, sustainable, and aligned with our goals. Campus-wide promotion, tracking, and assessment of these activities requires us to adopt the Experiential Learning Framework and use a centrally managed platform as a resource and catalogue.

Through the creation of a common language around experiential learning, the framework will improve our ability to communicate the value of experiential learning activities. It will increase our potential success in funding applications, tracking statistical data, and setting benchmarks for the diverse activities happening across campus.

A common tool for sharing opportunities	A new experiential learning platform will be implemented in 2020 to manage, track, and promote experiential learning opportunities. It will enable students to search and apply for diverse experiences related to their personal, academic, and professional goals. It will provide a central place for our communities and partners to post new experiential learning activities. By connecting stakeholders and managing opportunities, a centralized platform will support scaling up and assessing high-quality experiential learning.
Setting a baseline for measuring success	The Office of Experiential Learning will create a campus-wide inventory of curricular experiential learning opportunities. Later, a second inventory will capture co-curricular engagement. Together, these projects will provide a baseline of student participation in experiential learning at UCalgary. We will work closely with the Office of Institutional Analysis to develop a dashboard for tracking key metrics.
Understanding our impact	We commit to exploring and promoting high-quality experiential learning activities and understanding their impact on students, community, and industry. The Office of Experiential Learning will encourage scholarly inquiry of university teaching and learning focused on experiential learning and create pedagogical supports. In partnership with educators, administrators, and the community, we intend to review current and new models for community-campus relationships. It includes creating resources and supports for new partners, especially for non-profit organizations and small- and medium-sized enterprises.

" Honing my skills, building connections, and developing self-confidence through these experiential learning opportunities has helped me find my "why" I am a helper, a people person, a student, a learner, a peer, and an educator."

— **Helen Pethrick**

BACHELOR OF HEALTH SCIENCES
AND BACHELOR OF ARTS, 2019

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